



GEORGIA OSTEOPATHIC
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
— 1902 —

GOMA News & Updates

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GOMA Fall Conference Means CME with Great Options

One of the great things about GOMA CME conferences is the fact that you can learn in real time or on-demand at a time that is convenient to you as long as it is before December 31 which works since that is the end of the AOA three-year CME cycle.

Besides the lectures and speakers that we featured last month, there are two more lectures that complete the 16 hours of AOA 1-A CME program.

Maureen Kelly, MSW, will be giving a lecture on social services communities serving older adults. She has years of experience working with geriatric patients. In fact, her passion for the subject inspired her to create the Thanks Mom and Dad Fund twenty years ago. It is a charity created to honor parents, grandparents and mentors by supporting programs and services for the aging population. Ms. Kelly serves on the Georgia Council on Aging as its secretary and legislative chair. Her experiences in dealing with the challenges of serving older adults will make an impactful lecture.

Daren C. Wannamaker, DO, FACOI, is known by many in Georgia by his long history of teaching osteopathic medical students from PCOM Georgia. This will be the first time Dr. Wannamaker will be speaking at a GOMA conference. He has won multiple awards for his teaching, and at the Fall Conference, he plans on addressing common medical challenges that will be a real world medical update.

See [last month's newsletter](#) for the other speakers and lecture titles.

Now, sign up for this great GOMA Fall Conference to take advantage of the October 18 – 19 event or watch it by the end of the year with the on-demand option.

Register for GOMA's Virtual Fall Conference



Update on the Looming Cuts to Medicare Physician Payment

As you may know, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently proposed a 2.8% cut to Medicare physician payments, set to take effect on January 1, 2025. These cuts, should they go through, will put patient care and physician practices at serious risk.

The AOA continues to push back against these cuts and now we need your help to bolster our advocacy engagement. Using our advocacy action center, write your U.S. Representative and ask them to sign the Miller-Meeks/Panetta "Dear Colleague" letter. This bipartisan effort calls on House leadership to stop the proposed cut and provide

physicians with a much-needed payment update to address rising costs.

Stopping these cuts is essential to protecting patient access to care. Please join the effort to protect Medicare physician payment and support our patients' access to care by reaching out to Congress today!

The Osteopathic Advocacy Network makes contacting Congress easy and keeps you up to date on significant actions in Washington, D.C. [Click here to take action.](#)

Thank you for your continued advocacy engagement and supporting your osteopathic profession.



FTC's Proposed Ban on Noncompete Clauses has been Blocked

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) attempted to establish a new ruling for noncompete clauses earlier this year. This new rule proposed a comprehensive ban on noncompete clauses in contracts that would have begun on Sept. 4, 2024, and would have included higher-level senior executives.

The new rule would have made previous contracts with noncompete clauses unenforceable for all employees besides senior executives, defined as workers earning more than \$151,164 annually and who are in policy-making positions.

The FTC's ruling was predictably challenged in the courts, and on Aug. 20, a federal judge blocked the ban from going into effect on Sept. 4.

However, as previous coverage demonstrates, the FTC's actions show that the movement to ban noncompetes continues to gain traction in the U.S.

Ultimately, the FTC believes there are three major benefits to banning noncompetes, including reduced health care costs, an increase in new business formation and increased compensation for employees. Allowing for employee mobility, specifically in the health care industry, is expected to save up to \$74-\$94 billion (about \$600 per person in the U.S.) over the next 10 years.

The FTC even argues that if companies are concerned about trade secrets or business models, companies may still enforce nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) and that fixed-term employments are not covered by the ban. The commission fundamentally believes that if an employer wishes to retain an employee, they should do so by improving wages and working conditions in comparison to their competition.

If you are interested in getting involved with advocacy for either position, you should speak to your congressional representatives. Continued conversations about the noncompete ban can be brought to the public conscious and ultimately lead to greater changes, whether at the state level or federal level.

Ultimately, as employees in medicine, it is important to read, understand and agree to terms placed in your contract regardless of ongoing litigation.

[Read the entire article on this subject in *The DO* magazine.](#)



Judy Volcy, DO becomes Program Director at Morehouse IM Residency

After five years of service as Associate Program Director of Morehouse Internal Medicine program, Judy Volcy, DO became Program Director on August 26.

Dr. Volcy graduated from The New York College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1996. She then chose to do a one year AOA rotating internship at St. Michael's Medical Center in Newark, NJ. She then completed residency in Internal Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) in 2000. She remained as faculty until 2004. During that time, she was voted Faculty Member of Year in 2003 and in 2004 by the residents. She then practiced at Wellstar until 2018. During her time at Wellstar, she gave several lectures on behalf of Wellstar to the lay public at such venues as

Speaking of Women's Health at Cobb Galleria. In May of 2018, she returned to Morehouse as faculty. Since that time, she has served as the Co-Director of Grady Yellow Pod. She assumed the role of Assistant Program Director in April of 2019. During her year back at Morehouse, Dr. Volcy has completed the Emory at Grady Faculty Development Course in Quality Improvement and presented a poster at the Emory Research day in July of 2019. She recently published in the PhotoQuiz segment of American Family Physician. In June, she was voted Faculty Member of the Year by the residents.

Dr. Volcy enjoys teaching and loves discussing and working up interesting cases. She enjoys working for the underserved and finds it very rewarding. She enjoys volunteering in the HEAL clinic run by Morehouse Medical students. Quality Improvement has also become an interest of hers since returning to Morehouse.

MSM's Internal Medicine Residency Program trains a diverse and culturally competent group of residents, serving our nation in areas where access to quality health care is most needed while eliminating health care disparities. Upon graduation, MSM internal medicine residents are prepared to pursue any number of career paths,

including subspecialty fellowships, hospital medicine and international medicine.



Breast Surgeon returns to Georgia: Christopher J. Jean-Louis, DO for October & Breast Cancer Month

Piedmont Henry Hospital recently welcomed Christopher Jean-Louis, DO, a breast surgical oncologist, to its Breast Surgery Specialists Center.

Originally from Stone Mountain, Dr. Jean-Louis returned to Georgia following his medical training to care for his community and “make a positive difference in the lives of many breast cancer patients in the area,” hospital officials said.

“I believe that where I grew up contributed to who I am,” Dr. Jean-Louis said. “It means a lot to come home and care for the community.”

Dr. Jean-Louis attended the University of North Texas Health Science Center for medical school, had his residency with Atrium Navicent Health

Medical Center/Mercer School of Medicine, and completed fellowship with the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences.

He had numerous encounters with patients with breast cancer during his residency and they made a significant impression on him.

“Being able to follow patients from diagnosis through treatment and recovery really influenced me,” Dr. Jean-Louis said. “I want all of my patients to know that we will work through this together and that my entire team will help see you through.”

Breast cancer affects one in eight women in the United States, but advances in awareness, early detection and treatment have led to improved outcomes. Dr. Jean-Louis said he believes that with continual new innovations and research, breast cancer will continue to be tremendously curable.

“The advances in therapeutics are extensive and many treatments are successful. We’re seeing decreases in recurrence and survivability is also increasing,” Dr. Jean-Louis said. “Perhaps most importantly, the message of the importance of annual screenings is resonating. People tend to detect breast cancer earlier and this leads to an increase in survivability.”

Dr. Jean-Louis believes in a holistic approach to caring for patients with breast cancer. He said he

believes that it isn't enough to simply care for someone physically, so his team makes sure to care for them emotionally as well.

“I always treat my patients like family,” Dr. Jean-Louis said. “I start every encounter with the approach that this patient could be my mother, daughter or sister. That encourages me to go the extra mile, and it helps put the patients at ease.”

As October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Dr. Jean-Louis encourages women to be aware of any changes in their breasts and to be vigilant if anything is detected. By knowing your family history, noting abnormalities during self-exams, and having annual screenings performed, breast cancer can often be detected early, which leads to a significantly better prognosis for the patient.



**Notice to Health Care Providers Regarding
Misinformation About Abortions in Georgia**

From the Georgia Department of Community Health on September 25, 2024:

*This important notice is being issued to address misinformation concerning Georgia's abortion laws. In the State of Georgia, **abortion is permissible at any stage of pregnancy to save the life and health of the mother in the event of a medical emergency.***

Under the Living Infants Fairness and Equality Act ("LIFE Act")¹, "medical emergency" means a condition in which, in reasonable medical judgment, an abortion is necessary in order to prevent the death of the pregnant woman or the substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function of the pregnant woman. As such, physicians in Georgia are expected to follow standards of care in providing treatment for pregnant women in emergent situations. The law does not prohibit the removal of a dead unborn child caused by a spontaneous abortion or the removal of an ectopic pregnancy, nor does the law require that death of the mother be imminent for a doctor, in his or her reasonable medical judgment, to determine that a medical emergency exists. Also, exceptions are provided for reported cases of rape and incest.

*Health care facilities and providers must be aware that a physician providing life-saving treatment for pregnant women does not violate Georgia law and that failure to provide such treatment may constitute malpractice. Additionally, **a miscarriage is not an abortion.** O.C.G.A. § 31-9A-2(1) defines "abortion" as the "use of prescription of any instrument, medicine, drug, or any other substance or device with the intent to terminate the pregnancy of a female known to be pregnant" (emphasis added).*

*Physicians are reminded that **Georgia law requires life-saving medical care to a mother without delay** when necessary, according to O.C.G.A. § 31-9A-5.*

The failure to act timely in critical situations may result in regulatory sanctions from the Healthcare Facility Regulation Division of the Department of Community Health or other State boards and agencies. [More information on Georgia's abortion law is available on the Department of Public Health website.](#)



Also from Georgia Department of Community Health ...

Georgia Department of Community Health's Lynnette R. Rhodes, Esq., Chief Health Policy Officer, wrote on September 10:

We have completed our research regarding blood pressure monitors/cuffs. We are removing the prior authorization requirements effective October 1, 2024. Please note that we will monitor utilization and claims data to identify instances of fraud, waste, or abuse. Should the Department determine that fraud, waste, or abuse is occurring, we will reinstitute the prior authorization requirements. As you are aware, DME is an area that is plagued with

fraud, waste, and abuse. Therefore, we will monitor this change closely. We will issue a banner message closer to the October 1, 2024 date to notify providers. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

We know all of the Georgia osteopathic physicians are happy to hear about less prior authorizations.

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Resident Spotlight: Woodward "Woody" Gramling, DO

From Moultrie Observer

Hailing from St. Petersburg, Florida, Woodward "Woody" Gramling, DO started his journey to becoming a medical professional at a young age. He knew that he wanted to enter into healthcare so that he could make a meaningful impact, which is what led him to Moultrie.

“I wanted to enter the healthcare field to help others, as well as begin a career involving empathy and leadership,” said Dr. Gramling. “Practicing medicine allows me to accomplish both goals.”

Dr. Gramling completed his undergraduate studies at the University of South Florida before pursuing his medical degree at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine – South Georgia. His experiences in Moultrie during medical school left a lasting impression, and the launch of the new psychiatry residency program at Georgia South provided the perfect opportunity for him to remain in a place he had grown to love.

“I came to Moultrie for medical school and fell in love with the town,” said Dr. Gramling. “When I heard about the new psychiatry residency program at Georgia South, I knew I wanted to stay in Moultrie.”

During a rotation at Colquitt Regional in his third year of medical school, Dr. Gramling recalled how he felt he was being called into psychiatry and how he could help make a difference with patients needing mental health services.

“I felt a real connection and calling to the field,” said Dr. Gramling. “I was fortunate to work with Dr. Lisa Rudolph-Watson, Georgia South Psychiatry program director, and she showed me the

difference that psychiatrists make in the community. I saw this as something that I would love to do as a career. I enjoy talking with patients and I saw the amount of time spent with them as a unique quality that differentiates psychiatry from other fields of medicine. Getting to know your patients in an open discussion is a passion of mine. I want to help bridge the gap between mental and physical health.”

Georgia South Psychiatry Residency Program was a natural choice for Dr. Gramling, given his familiarity with the local community and the program's alignment with his career goals. The program's emphasis on community involvement and its focus on serving rural areas resonated with him, reinforcing his commitment to addressing the healthcare needs of underserved populations.

Dr. Gramling's experience at Georgia South has been marked by positive experiences – from having more personalized training opportunities to the supportive environment and collaborative atmosphere among his fellow residents and staff.

“I have loved my time here at Georgia South,” said Dr. Gramling. “I get to treat a wide variety of patients and conditions, and I'm allowed to have greater interaction with patients compared to other larger teaching hospitals. My mentors and

attending physicians are interested in helping me achieve my goals as a physician, which is great.”

Now in his second year of residency, Dr. Gramling is working toward his future career goals. Once his residency is complete, he is interested in pursuing a career in sports psychiatry and hopes to eventually run his own practice.

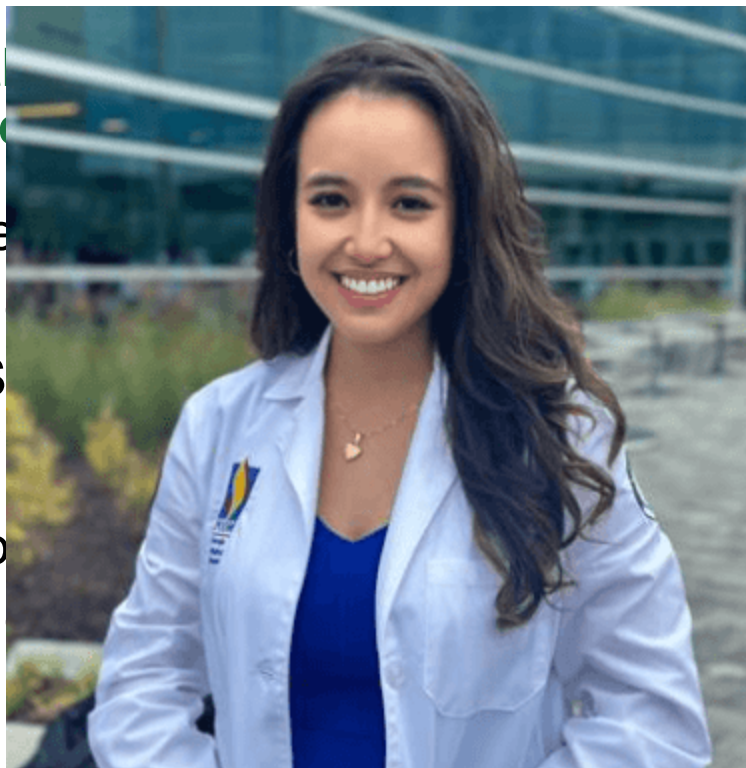
One of Dr. Gramling's standout memories from his time at Georgia South thus far is winning the hospital softball tournament, highlighting the strong sense of camaraderie within the residency program. When not in the clinic, he enjoys sports, going to the gym, and spending time with his two dogs. He also enjoys traveling, having visited 49 of the 50 U.S. states.

As he continues his residency at Georgia South, Dr. Woody Gramling is dedicated to his growth as a physician and excited about the opportunities ahead in his chosen field.



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**Great Niece of Famous Doctor Returns to
Cambodia as Part of PCOM GA Mission Trip**

When PCOM Georgia medical student Brooke Demetri (DO '27) was presented with the opportunity to join a medical relief trip to Cambodia, she knew she couldn't turn it down.

As the daughter of a Khmer Rouge genocide survivor and the great niece of a heroic physician turned Academy Award-winning actor, Ms. Demetri has always had a connection to both Cambodia and the study of medicine, and knew this trip would have a lasting impact on her career as a medical provider.

Brooke's great uncle, Dr. Haing S. Ngor, was a gynecologist and obstetrician during the 1975 Khmer Rouge regime, who later won an Academy Award for his role portraying journalist Dith Pran in the biographical drama film, *The Killing Fields*.

This past summer, Ms. Demetri joined with fellow students in providing medical services to over 500 patients in Cambodia. The experience allowed Brooke to not only honor her family's legacy and meet some of her relatives for the first time, but also continue her great uncle's work of providing critical care to those in underserved communities.

"I love getting involved in the community and doing community work," said Demetri. "I never thought I'd have the opportunity to travel to my family's country and give back there. When I heard that Dr.

(Donald) Penney (PCOM professor and neurosurgeon who is also double board certified in emergency medicine) was organizing a mission trip to Cambodia, I decided this was the year to do that. I love learning more about my family's culture and giving back to communities that don't have anything."

The New York native, who earned her bachelor's degree in neuroscience at State University of New York at Geneseo, said PCOM representatives spent a week in June in Cambodia, and she stayed an additional week visiting with family members.

"We opened up a free clinic where anyone could come," she said. "I think we saw more than 500 patients. One day, we saw 200 — it was non-stop. You could equate it to an urgent care operation; people would come and we'd take their history and physical exams. We prescribed medications and saw a lot of things we wouldn't have seen in the United States.

"That takes me back a little bit because if (Dr. Ngor) was here, he'd be so proud to see our school go to Cambodia and do what he did. It gives me chills thinking about it. It was his life's mission to build up Cambodia again and help the families who lost everything."

[Read more about Brooke Demetri's recent journey to Cambodia in the *Gwinnett Daily Post*.](#)



Summer Program Reaffirms Student's Passion for Orthopedics

This summer PCOM South Georgia medical student Michael Abaskaron (DO '27) was one of 20 medical school students selected to participate in the Summer Research Externship Program at Ohio Health in Columbus. He focused on orthopedics.

“This program provides medical students with exposure to a field they might be interested in,” he said. “Basically, I was working with orthopedic surgery residents, orthopedic trauma surgery attendings and fellows helping them with their research projects.”

The eight-week program included research didactics for the first week. The rest of the time participants shadowed their mentors or assisted them.

“I have been interested in orthopedic surgery for a while, so seeing that firsthand, and shadowing physicians scrubbing into the operating room and seeing procedures was really cool,” Mr. Abaskaron said. “This experience reaffirmed my passion for this field.”

In addition to watching surgical procedures, Mr. Abaskaron's research also included retrospective patient chart reviews to gather data for research projects as well as specific case reports. At the end of the summer program, he made an oral presentation on one of the projects, which investigated demographic correlations in pelvic dysmorphism.

“Something I really took away this summer was how big of a part research plays in just any field, especially surgery, because there are always new techniques and new ways of doing things, better ways of doing things,” he said. “In any of the didactic sessions that I attended where the residents and the attendings would meet and talk about different surgeries, they also always brought up different research studies that were new and

showed better approaches. Looking into that, I really think research is a huge part of any field.”

A first-generation American, Mr. Abaskaron was born in New Jersey. He and his family moved to the Cincinnati, Ohio, area when he was seven. For him, that's home.

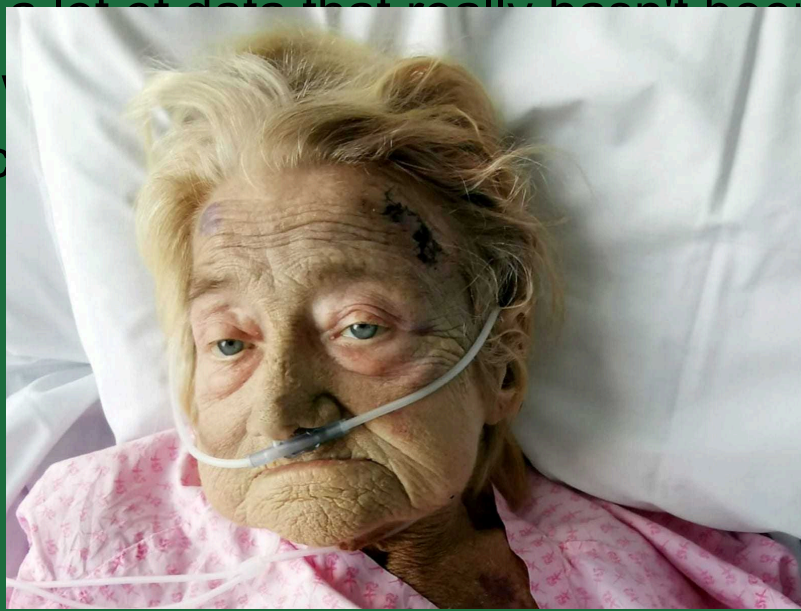
He earned a bachelor's degree in biology from the Ohio State University in Columbus and master's degree from the University of South Florida in Tampa. After working in cancer research for a couple of years, he began medical school at PCOM South Georgia.

Mr. Abaskaron said he chose PCOM South Georgia because of its small class size and facilities.

“When I was looking for medical schools, I wanted something a little bit more personable, and that's why PCOM South Georgia kind of stuck out to me,” he said. “Having the class size of around 60, and hearing from other classes that they're very close with their professors. They even play pickleball with them. I love that! Plus, it's really a state-of-the-art facility with a lot of new features.”

While Mr. Abaskaron is still working on a couple of projects with residents at Ohio Health, he now has ideas for other projects related to orthopedic patients in rural areas like South Georgia.

“There's a lot of data that really hasn't been tapped yet, so I hope to work with local doctors



Rosebud

*By Scott C. Biggerstaff, DO; Assistant Professor;
Division of Hospital Medicine; U of Minnesota
Published previously in JAMA September 19, 2024*

I saw an aged woman adorned
by those she loved
and my heart wondered.
She couldn't tell
if she was dying or perhaps
had died already but
she knew about journeys –
that we are only borne far
by those we hold.

I offered Ensure, beef broth
for the way ahead.
She asked for

bapa soup, timpsila.

“It is nutritious,” her family said.

“It is from our land.”

It is morbid,
self-indulgent to
wonder who will attend
your death but
noble to attend to others
on the way and –
I thought –
When I die
alone,
will my journey
see me off?

A man came to pray with her.
I wanted to listen,
not to learn where she was going but
which way she had come